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HOUSEKEEPERS' CHAT

Wednesday, January 6, 1932

(NOT FOR PUBLICATION)

Subject: "Play Suits for Cold Days." Information from the Bureau of Home Economics, U.S.D.A.

Bulletins available: "Play Suits for Winter!"

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"Over the river and through the woods,
To grandfather's house we go;
The horse knows the way
To carry the sleigh
Through white and drifted snow.
Over the river and through the woods,
Oh, how the wind does blow.
It stings the toes,
And bites the nose,
As over the fields we go."

Lots of fun back in those old-fashioned winter times. And some things that weren't so much fun and not mentioned in this old song. Winter clothes, for example. The clothing specialists hadn't come on the scene in those days and no one had thought of taking the subject of dressing for the weather seriously. The main idea in everybody's mind was to bundle up in winter, to put on all the clothes possible and the heavier they were, the better.

"What did you wear to play in on cold winter days when you were small?" I asked Uncle Ebenezer.

Uncle Ebenezer smiled as he looked back into his memory. "I wore my father's old clothes cut down to fit me. Instead of a cap, I wore a 'comforter', a long scarf which wrapped around my head, crossed in front, and tied in back so that the ends hung down. Warm, but not comfortable. One thing I was particularly proud of was a pair of red-top boots with copper toes. Of course, we wore red flannel underwear all winter. Flannel, especially red, was supposed to ward off rheumatism. When I went out to play I was bundled up in many wraps coats and shawls--entirely too many for comfort. It was difficult business to play winter games, especially running games like duck and geese, which was a great favorite with the boys in our neighborhood. So many clothes made it hard work to move comfortably. Yes, it was even an effort to build a snow

fort with all those heavy awkward clothes on. But my mother was a busy woman with six boys and two daughters to sew for, and she didn't have time to figure out the kind of clothes which would be best for us. She didn't have the advantages of the present day women, who can profit by all these studies on the right clothes for children done by the clothing specialists."

Modern mothers know that the right midwinter clothes for the youngsters are warm yet light weight and comfortable. Cold outside need not bring colds. And children may go out to play in the snow protected against the cold and damp, yet dressed for activity. A well-known child specialist has recently listed six points for children's health in winter. First, warm, light-weight inside clothing and windproof outer garments. Second, a warm, but not hot indoor atmosphere with plenty of moisture in the air. Third, a normal diet. Fourth, as much sunlight as he can get, with cod liver oil to supplement. Five, protection against contagion. And, six, mental health, harmony and peace at home.

The right clothes, I might say, have their influence on this last point—mental health, harmony and peace, especially if you are trying to get that snow man built before mother calls that it's time to come in for lunch. Tight sleeves, neck lines that choke and bind, heavy wraps that pull down small shoulders, caps that keep falling off and scarves that keep unwinding—nobody can be happy and do efficient work out in the snow with such trappings. And such clothes aren't necessary either. Over at the Bureau of Home Economics there is an exhibit of modern winter playsuits that ought to please any youngster and any mother. But since you can't all come to Washington to see these suits, the next best thing is to send for the leaflet written about them, which is illustrated with pictures of the suits on real children.

All children's garments, but especially play suits, should allow freedom and natural movement of the body. Now that outdoor exercise is being emphasized more and more, clothes which will keep the youngster warm on a cold day and still allow freedom in play are in great demand.

What should play suits be made of? The most desirable fabrics are warm, light in weight, pliable, moisture-proof, and closely woven or knitted. A soft, closely woven, fuzzy cloth may be much warmer than a harsh, smooth, leathery fabric. What about knitted materials, and sweater suits? They are elastic, and fit snugly, but they are less warm than woven materials, because the stiches are far apart and the wind can blow through.

For many years wool fabrics were considered the only ones that would really hold in heat. Recently however, cotton materials that compare favorably with the wools are appearing on the market.

When the children play out of doors, they must be kept dry. Cloth may be woven so tightly that it sheds moisture, or it may be treated so that it will turn off water, and slushy snow, like a duck's back.

Children love bright colors. Their delight in bright reds and blues and greens can be used to advantage when selecting outside garments. You know how often children dart across the street, in the path of motorists? Out side wraps of grey, tan, brown, navy blue and black blend in with the background. Put a bright blue or green or red or orange provides a safety zone around the youngster.

When Johnny Junior goes out to play, shall he wear a one-piece play suit or a two piece play suit? Remember that Johnny is a modern youngster. His mother wants him to learn to help himself. She knows that by learning to dress himself he will not only grow self-reliant and independent, but that his small fingers will be trained to perform correctly the many tasks that will follow in later years. So Johnny wears a one-piece play suit.

And, by the way, of course you know that front openings encourage self-help. Arrange these openings without complicated plackets and they will be easy for youngsters to handle. This is true both for the body of the suit and the leg openings as well. When at play, children often sit with one foot under them. Sand, dirt and snow can then sift in through a side opening. Furthermore, a small child can reach a closing on top of his leg much more easily than he can reach a placket on the side.

I won't have time to describe all the good ideas about winter play suits in this leaflet. I know you'll want to see the leaflet yourself anyway. We have a nice new pile of them on our shelves. To get one all you have to do is to write me a postcard saying that you would like Leaflet Number 54, called "Play Suits for Winter" and you will wake up some morning and find one in your mail box.

Let's see. That lady who wrote for an oyster dinner. I hope she's listening in today, for I have one all ready for her.

This meal, I'd like to suggest, as ideal for one of these very chill winter nights, when nothing feels as good as a crackling fire and when fingers and toes grow cold unless the furnace is very active. Never mind if Grandmother does come to the table wearing her knitted hug-me-tight and complaining that she can't remember any such weather for years and years. After she has eaten this meal, she'll feel better.

An oyster meal, I said. Scalloped oysters; Hashed browned potatoes to go with them; and carrots in parsley butter. Then a salad made with orange sections and rings of mild white Bermuda onions served on lettuce. French dressing, of course. For dessert, let's have baked cup custard, served hot, and garnished with red jelly. Crisp, sweet wafers to go with it.

I think I'd better repeat that menu. Scalloped oysters; Hashed browned potatoes; Carrots in parsley butter; Orange and Bermuda onion salad; Cup custards served hot with red jelly; and Wafers.

Oysters may be scalloped with or without rice. See the green cookbook pages 34 and 35. Since we're having potatoes for this meal, however, let's make the scallop without rice. Six ingredients for plain scalloped oysters. If you're ready, I'll list them.

1 and 1/2 quarts of oysters.

(You can use canned oysters, if you can't buy them fresh.)

3 cups of dry bread crumbs

1/4 cup of melted butter

Salt

Pepper

Milk

Did you get all those? I'll repeat them. (Repeat.)

Drain the oysters from their liquor and pick out any pieces of shell. Mix the crumbs and melted fat. Grease the baking dish. Now spread a thin layer of crumbs on the bottom. Cover this with a layer of oysters and season with salt and pepper. Now add another layer of crumbs and continue until all the oysters are used. Pour on the oyster liquor, and, if needed, enough milk to moisten the mixture thoroughly. Cover the top with the remaining crumbs. Bake in a moderate oven (350 degrees F.) for 25 to 35 minutes. Serve from the baking dish. Scalloped oysters are particularly attractive and easy to serve if baked in ramekins or large scallop shells.

Tomorrow: "Canned Versus Fresh Foods."

